



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

# 1 JOHN

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

# READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 1 John heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



**Begin with prayer.** Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



**As you study, read the Bible passage first.** Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



**If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John)** (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



**After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion.** Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

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LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU  
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

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COLOSSIANS 3:16<sup>A</sup>

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## LESSON 1

# A LETTER TO THE FAMILY OF GOD



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 1:1-4**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](https://www.TTB.org/1John) to **1 John Intro–1:1** and **1 John 1:1-4**

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In the last decade of the first century, the apostle John moved to Ephesus to pastor the church founded by Paul. It was near the end of his life when he wrote three important parts of the New Testament—first, the Gospel of John (around 90 A.D.), the book of Revelation while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos, and then, back in Ephesus, he wrote three final letters to the Christian community made up of house-churches in and around Ephesus. He died soon after, around 100 A.D., and was buried there.

Ephesus was a fascinating place at the time—a complex, Roman world with strong, prevailing attitudes and beliefs from Roman culture. This thinking shapes the message of John’s first letter.

Many followers of Jesus in Ephesus were children of the first Christians. They had heard the stories of what it was like for their parents when Acts 19 took place in their city. But the newness of their faith in Jesus had worn off; the thrill and glory of those first days had faded. Revelation 2:4 records John’s observation that the Ephesians had left their “first love.” The Ephesians’ devotion to Jesus Christ was at low ebb.

This second generation of Christians had also lost their high moral standards. Believers are called saints—from the Greek word *hagios*, meaning “set aside for

God's sole use, belonging to God." The temple was *hagios*; the Sabbath was *hagios*. Christians were also to be *hagios*. But the children and grandchildren of the first Christians did not want to be different. They wanted to fit in with the world, rather than be set apart.

In Ephesus, persecution was not the enemy of Christianity. The danger to this group of believers was not harassment from the outside but seduction from the inside. Christianity was not in danger of being destroyed; it was in danger of being compromised. There was an attempt to "improve it," give it intellectual respectability, and let it reflect popular philosophy. It may sound as familiar as attitudes we face today; Christians then wanted to point out the good in everyone's heart and deny the need to deal with sin. "Make the Bible relevant and accessible." But be on your guard when you hear false teaching like this, and fortify your thinking with the Bible's truth.

Finally, a real threat to this second-generation church was the heresy of Gnosticism that had crept in. This false teaching boasted "super knowledge." They said they knew things normal Christians couldn't.

Gnostics taught that Jesus was fully God—but not fully man. Various forms of Gnosticism taught the body was evil, so God could not unite Himself with it. Jesus only *seemed* to have a body, but actually did not—that when He walked, He left no footprints. Others taught that divinity came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the cross. John was one of the last people to have actually known Jesus Christ personally and was uniquely qualified to combat this false teaching.

So this first letter from John, 1 John, reads like a sermon for believers in the Ephesus community to teach them how to stand firm against heresy and encourage them to walk in the light. It's a family epistle—a letter to the family of God. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ brings us into the family and into the fellowship of the Father's house. John referred to God as our Father 13 times and to the believers as "little children" 11 times. This epistle reads like a sermon from a devoted pastor who loves and is concerned for the family of God.

Some have called 1 John "the holy of holies" of the New Testament—how God invites the believer into a sacred, deeply personal relationship with Him. We read it to know how to cultivate that intimate fellowship with God.

The church is a body of believers God blesses "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). God gives us that position when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—this brings us into the family of

God. In the family we have a relationship which can be broken when we sin, but then restored when “we confess our sins.” Then “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

As our fellowship grows deeper, the better we know God experientially, the closer we abide in Him (John 14:21-24), and the more we will experience the life He intends for us. First John instructs and motivates the family of God to grow closer to God and each other (how to “walk in the light”), and how to restore our relationship with God and others when it is broken by sin. This is an intimate, practical family letter that helps us continue to believe in the name of Jesus Christ.

The sermon starts “from the beginning.” *Let’s talk about Jesus*, John said, *who was in the beginning*. What beginning is he talking about? Scripture describes three “beginnings.”

First, Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible doesn’t date creation, it just states the fact. No one knows *when* God created the heavens and the earth—not one scientist or one theologian has a clue when Genesis 1:1 really happened. You must first accept that God created the heavens and earth before you’re able to read much further in the Word of God.

God has eternity behind Him. Although we don’t know what He was doing before He created the heaven and the earth, He was doing something. And when He created, He did it for a purpose. He is working out a plan in His universe today which is bigger than our mind can comprehend.

Secondly, the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” Then comes creation. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3)

Go back as far as you can think, beyond creation, back billions and trillions of years, and out of eternity comes the Lord Jesus Christ. Way back there He is already past tense; He is the Ancient of Days. “In the beginning *was* [not *is*] the Word.” In other words, this is a beginning that doesn’t even have a beginning because He had no beginning.

Lastly, 1 John 1:1—“That which was from the beginning ....” Out of eternity comes the Lord Jesus Christ, and He already is past tense. “In the beginning was the Word.” This is a beginning that doesn’t have a beginning—because



Jesus had no beginning. Our minds can't begin to comprehend it until we come to John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." This takes us back to Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem where we meet Jesus—fully God, fully man.

This introduction to the book of 1 John ushers us from this earth out into eternity.

## ABOUT JOHN

John and his brother, James, met Jesus in Jerusalem when Jesus was 30 years old. Later they were with their father, mending nets, when Jesus came by and called them to follow Him. When John says, *I want to tell you about Him*, he witnesses to Jesus' reality. *We saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears and felt with our own hands. We gazed on Him. We touched Him with our own hands. For three years we experienced, "witnessed," eternal life in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ* (v. 1-3). As one of the remaining people who actually walked with Jesus, John had credibility to testify Jesus was indeed fully man, contrary to what the Christians were hearing from the Gnostics.

John *heard* the Lord Jesus, heard His voice, and when he listened to Him, he listened to God. They saw Him with their own eyes. In our day we can't see Him with physical eyes, but we can see Him with eyes of faith (see 1 Peter 1:8). The Lord Jesus said to Thomas, who would not believe He had been resurrected until he could see and handle Him, *Thomas, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing* (John 20:29). Today we walk by faith, and the Lord Jesus Christ can be made as real to us as He was to Thomas.

John says "we have looked upon" the Lord. The original word for *looked* is where we get our English word *theatre*, meaning "to gaze intently upon." In a theatre, you sit and watch with a steady gaze for hours. John is saying that for three years they gazed upon Jesus. We look to Him in faith for salvation. And we will do that as we study this sermon. We will in faith gaze at His glory (see John 1:14).

"Our hands have handled." John reminds us, too, that he was in the room when Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection. Jesus said, *Look at my hands; look at my feet—it's really Me. Touch me. Look me over from head to toe. A ghost doesn't have muscle and bone like this.* Imagine that scene. Did they hug Him? Did they finger the nail prints and were finally convinced He was indeed man, the Word made flesh, God in the flesh? (See John 20.)

*We handled Him—He was still flesh and bones.* John isn't talking about a theory. He is talking about Someone he heard, he saw, and he handled. God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, was brought out into the open where people could see Him. This is the One who is the Word of Life—the One we can have fellowship with today. We can have fellowship with *God!*

This is one of the most glorious opportunities we could ever have today. And because of our fellowship with Jesus, we can have fellowship one with another. *Fellowship*, the Greek word *koinonia*, means “having in common or sharing with.” Christian fellowship means sharing the things of Christ. And to do this, we must know the Lord Jesus—not only know about Him, but know Him as our personal Savior. Fellowship for the believer means we meet and talk together about the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. To have fellowship with God means we share His heart. What is important to Him is important to us.

But how? How can we—sinful and ungodly people—have fellowship with a holy God? How can this gulf be bridged? To get over this seemingly impossible hurdle, John presents three methods. Two of them are man-made and won't work. The other is God's method and the only one that will work.

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**NEXT: Find out what method of fellowship works.**

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## LESSON 1



## **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. Does it surprise you that the second generation of Christians had already drifted from their first love?
2. Do you see any places in your life where, like the recipients of this letter, you don't want to be set apart to God?
3. In what areas do you think believers today struggle with wanting to improve the Christian faith?

4. Family can mean different things to different people, but what does it mean to you to be a part of God's family?

5. What are some specific ways you could follow John's command to "walk in the light?"

6. Why would John want the readers of his letter to know he had experienced Jesus with his own eyes, ears, and hands?

7. Imagine that you, too, could claim you had personally seen Jesus, heard Jesus, and touched Jesus. Would that make a difference in your Christian walk?

## LESSON 2

# HOW TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 1:5–2:3**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 1:5-7**, **1 John 1:7-10**, and **1 John 2:1-3**

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God intends your relationship with Him to be the sweetest experience of your life. He calls it “walking in the light,” that is, in His presence. Having fellowship with God means we share His heart.

*Koinonia* sometimes refers to the act of fellowship—sharing the Lord’s Supper is an act of fellowship, so is giving and praying. We share together in these wonderful things of Christ and our fellowship is sweet.

But John explains a different experience of fellowship with God Himself. This fellowship is just between the two of you, similar to what Philippians 3:10 describes as knowing Jesus “and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.” This kind of fellowship brings a fullness of joy that is desperately needed in the body of Christ. There’s a sadness in our body that shouldn’t be there. But real joy can come through fellowship with Christ.

But how can we—sinful and ungodly people—have fellowship with God?

To get over this seemingly impossible hurdle, John tells us three ways we try—two are man-made and won’t work. The other is God’s method and is the only one that will work.

***This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*** – 1 John 1:5

God is light, which means He is holy. This is so important. God is love and life, but first He is holy. Light speaks of the glory, radiance, beauty, and wonder of God. But light also reveals flaws and impurities, so it speaks of the purity of God. We are not holy, so how can the gulf be bridged between a wonderful Savior and you? The canyon between us is steep and deep, so how can sinful man walk with God?

Here is the dilemma: We are sin-filled creatures. Without God's grace for salvation, we would be just creatures in rebellion against Him. God makes it very clear He finds no good within man. No one is righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10). Not only that, but we live in a world in rebellion against almighty God (Romans 8:7).

So if God is holy and I am a sinner, how can I have fellowship with Him? Men and women have attempted to do this in three different ways, two of which are wrong.

## **METHOD #1: BRING GOD DOWN TO MAN'S LEVEL**

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6). That's strong language! If you and I say we have fellowship with God but walk in darkness, we are liars. John says it quite bluntly.

A great many today say they have fellowship with God, but they're not dealing with the things that are wrong in their lives. If you are going to walk with God, you are going to walk in *light*. Light speaks of the white purity of God and the stainless holiness of God. God moves without making a shadow because He is pure light. Light not only gives light, but it also cleanses. Light guides down a path of holiness. It gives us courage and prompts us to keep moving on.

Look closely at your heart. If you find sin in your life, you are not walking with Him. You cannot bring Him down to your level. But here's the good news—if we walk in the light of Christ, His blood keeps on cleansing us from our sin (1 John 1:7). He died to save us from the guilt of sin. You *have been* saved—that's justification. You are *being* saved—that is sanctification. And someday, you *will* be saved. Don't be discouraged; God is not through with us. He wants to deliver us from the pollution of sin.

Some think that walking in the light is meticulously obeying every command of God. They think only then will God cleanse us. But God doesn't say we should walk *according* to light, but He said we should walk *in* the light. *Where* we walk, not *how* we walk. Go into God's presence and allow the Word of God to shine upon your heart. Is there sin there? It's possible you can be walking in darkness, thinking you are all right. Too many are comfortable in their sin. But if they get into the light of the Word of God, they would see they are sinners and can't bring God down to their level. If you are going to walk with God, you are going to walk in *light*.

## **METHOD #2: BRING MAN UP TO GOD'S LEVEL**

Some won't admit they are sinners. "I don't sin; I just make mistakes." But God says truth is not in them. This is worse than being a liar; it means they don't even have the truth.

Anyone who says this isn't fooling God, their family, or their friends, but they sure do deceive themselves. They rationalize and explain their sin away in hopes of bridging the gap between them and God; they bring themselves up to a place of perfection (or at least a place better than the other guy). But they *cannot* bring God down to their level.

What about if you are a Christian but now you see it in the light of the Word of God? Have you lost your salvation? The answer is no. We're talking *family* truth in this book. If you are in the family of God and have sin in your life, God won't treat you like the sinner outside of Christ, but one of His own disobedient children who needs correction and a good cleansing. You haven't lost your salvation, but you have lost your fellowship with Him until you deal with the problem.

So, since you can't bring God down to your level or yourself up to His level, what are you going to do?

## **METHOD #3: CONFESS**

If we refuse to admit we are sinners, then we live in a world without truth. But if we freely admit we have sinned, God will be utterly reliable to forgive our sins and make us thoroughly clean from all that is evil. That's what 1 John 1:9 says.

When you "confess" your sin, you literally "say the same thing as God says." When His Word says something you're doing is sin, you are to get over on God's side and look at it and say, "You're right, Lord. I say the same thing

You do: It is sin.” Rationalizing it isn’t an option, either. If God says it’s sin, it’s sin, and we must confess the same thing God says about it. Confessing sin is one of the greatest needs in the body of Christ. Not public confession—you don’t take a bath in public, so you don’t need to confess publicly. Go to God privately for cleansing.

Tell Him about it. He wants you to come to Him. Tell Him you’ve failed. Tell Him you’ve been wrong. Tell Him you want to say the same thing about your sin that He says about it. Show Him you’ve turned from that sin. God hates it and now so do you. Get His help. He is your Father. You are in the family. You have lost your fellowship with Him, but it can be restored. If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins. He has made a marvelous, wonderful way back to Himself.

This is the message of the gospel of the grace of God that takes the hell-doomed sinner and by simple faith in Christ brings him into the family of God where he becomes an heir and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. What a gift.

John continues his letter with a plea, “I write these things to you ... to help you to avoid sin. But if a man should sin, remember that our advocate before the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous, the one who made personal atonement for our sins (and for those of the rest of the world as well)” (1 John 2:1, Phillips New Testament).

Although God has provided a way for us not to live in sin, we don’t always make use of it. He wants us to walk in a way that pleases Him, in obedience to His Word. These things, John writes, will help you not live in sin.

Because we are God’s child, we will walk in the light. In fact, when we do, we’ll see just how far we have fallen short of what God wants. Every sincere child of God wants to have fellowship with Him, and yet he knows in himself he will fall short of God’s standard. Any sin in your life, be it ever so small, breaks your relationship with the Father.

Many Christians constantly disobey God, then wonder why they don’t feel close to Him. Sin breaks fellowship. But the good news is if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father. We have Jesus. Notice John says, “We have an Advocate with the Father”—John doesn’t call Him by the impersonal name “God” because He is still our *Father* even though we have sinned. Our salvation rests on what Christ has done for us, and that is a finished work.



GOD INTENDS  
YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM  
TO BE THE

*sweetest*

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YOUR LIFE.



THRU the BIBLE

What Jesus has done is all we need for salvation. And He is God's provision for us when we sin and need our fellowship with the Father restored. We need an *advocate*—a *parakletos*, the same word translated “comforter.” The Holy Spirit is our Comforter on earth, and Christ is our Comforter in heaven. An advocate—a *paraclete*, a *helper*—is a legal term for “one who will come to your side to help in every time of need.”

When we sin, we don't lose our salvation. But Satan, the accuser of the brethren, wants us to lose it. Revelation 12:10 tells us he accuses us before our God day and night. But the Lord Jesus then steps in as our Advocate.

Not only is He our comforter, our helper, but Jesus is also our propitiation. He paid for our sins with His suffering. He is for us on every level.

Before we even repent of that cruel or brutal word we said, or the very moment we had that evil thought, or the moment we did that wrong act, Jesus Christ was there at the throne of God to represent us as Satan was there accusing us.

Then, because of Jesus' faithful advocacy, the Holy Spirit convicts us of the sin, and we confess it to the Father.

The sincere child of God wants to please the Father. He invites the process, painful though it may seem at first. The psalmist expressed it this way: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

If you are a child of God, you are in the *family* of God, and He wants to have *fellowship* with you. You can talk to Him honestly and openly without fear. He knows you better than you know yourself and loves you more than you can understand.

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**NEXT: Learn that you can love Jesus by loving others.**

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4. Be honest about the times you walk in darkness. What do those times tell you about yourself and people in general?

5. If confession means saying the same thing about our sin that God says about it, then what would be our attitude toward our sins when we sincerely confess them?

6. What does it mean for us that Jesus advocates for us to the Father?

7. Imagine what it would be like if we could earn our way to God. How would that change the way you live your life, and why is God's way better?

## LESSON 3

# LOVING JESUS BY LOVING OTHERS



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 2:3-16**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 2:3-8** and **1 John 2:8-16**

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God is light—and as we walk in His light, we can have fellowship with Him. We are His feeble, frail, faltering, falling little children, yet we can fellowship with God because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, just keeps on cleansing us from sin. Jesus is our Advocate with the Father. He’s for us—He’s on our side.

God is also love—and in His love we can have fellowship with each other the way God intends. Love is the very heart of this letter from John. In fact, we know we are in God’s family when we love each other.

Loving each other is so important to God’s family that God makes it one of His commandments—not one of the Ten Commandments, like it’s a legal issue; loving each other is a family command. We’re told to bear one another’s burdens, to forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven each of us, and to keep loving one another earnestly. (See Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 4:8.) This is a different kind of life God calls us to live, and He gives us a new nature to do it.

We can know whether we really have His life or not if we keep His commandments—and not only His commandments but His Word. Obeying His Word means we are willing to go even farther than anything He

commanded. If we want to have fellowship with the Father and enjoy it with confidence, we must keep His commandments.

The important thing is to know Jesus Christ. How can we be sure we do? Only by doing what He calls us to can we have that deep-down-in-your-heart confidence that we *know* we know Him. Anyone can fake their way through, but when your heart is to please God, then you keep His commandments. They're not grievous rules; they are for our good.

It's one thing to say you are a child of God and another to have His life in you, a new nature that cries out to the Father for fellowship and wants to obey Him. If you have no love for God's Word and disobey Jesus, then it's hard to say if you have been born again.

No one can do or be all the Lord Jesus Christ did or was, but if we set our hearts on doing our Father's will, which is what the Lord Jesus did (John 8:29), then you are walking like He walked. We aren't sinless like Jesus, but we can say, "I sometimes stumble and fall, but I *want* to please Him." When you want to do God's will, it confirms your faith. The person who doesn't know Jesus as Savior never wants to do God's will, even if they say they are a Christian (see John 14:15, 23).

Some people grit their teeth and say, "Yes, I'll obey Him." But their motive is compliance, not love. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). When you obey His commandments because you love Him, a great many of the family problems will be solved and the uncertainty in your own heart about your salvation will disappear.

It's a subtle but important difference between the *Word* of God and the *commandments* of God. Commandments are the Word of God, but the Word of God is not all commandments—it's more than just commandments. A child of God not only wants to obey God's commandments but also wants to obey the *Word* of God. He wants to please his Father in everything he does. The unsaved person wants the security of being a Christian while living as much like the world as possible. A genuine child of God wants to bring joy to God's heart and fellowship and joy to their own life. Christianity is based on a love relationship. Salvation is a love affair. John tells us more later, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We have been brought into a Holy of Holies kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.



If you love Jesus, you are going to keep His Word—you can't help it. You *want* to please the person you love. The question is not, "Are you committed to Christ?" The question is, "Do you *love* Christ?"

Too many are only thinking about the sins of commission (what you do) and forget about the sins of omission (things you know you should do but neglect). (See James 4:17.) The Bible makes no distinction between the gravity of sins of commission and sins of omission. They are equally missing the mark.

The one who keeps God's Word grows up in God's love. So, how are you growing? This inventory might help. Ask yourself:

- What is my attitude toward sin? Does it trouble me?
- Is there anything hindering my fellowship with my heavenly Father?
- Do I want the sin more than I want a close relationship with God?

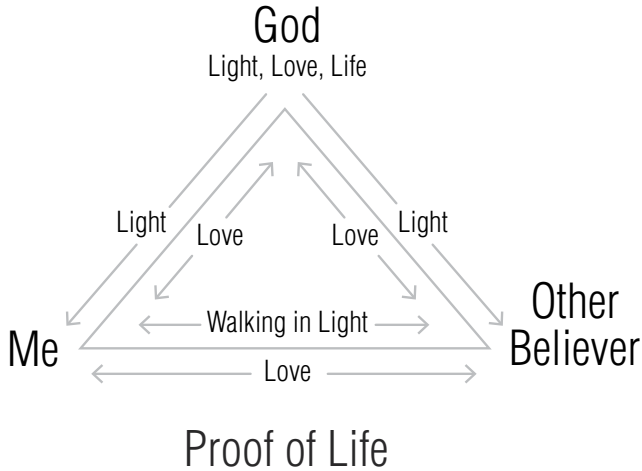
If anything comes to mind, confess it to Him right now. Repent of it (turn your back on it). On that basis God will restore fellowship with us, and the assurance of salvation comes to our hearts.

Jesus told His disciples that loving each other is how the world would know they belonged to Him (see John 13:34-35; 15:10, 12). John, who was part of that group and heard this first-hand from Jesus, now writes it again to us in this letter. *Love Jesus by loving others*. On this side of the Cross, we have the Holy Spirit to help us do what Jesus asks.

We have a new nature—and it wants to please the Lord and do His will. Because "the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining," (1 John 2:8) we press on to know the Lord God better, understanding His will more completely, growing every day. How do we do this? We get into God's Word. The written Word reveals the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Bread of Life and the Water of Life. We will starve if we don't feed on Him.

Test yourself. A child of God can't walk in the light and hate its brother. To *hate* them reveals you are in darkness (John 3:19). We were born in darkness and our understanding is darkened, but God offers us light and life and we are responsible if we reject the light coming to us through the Word of God. If you walk in the light, it will chase away all darkness. Instead of turning from its searching rays, let God's Word search your heart.

The Christian life is like a triangle. God is at the top of the triangle, and the light of God comes down into yours and other's hearts and lives. Your love for God goes up, for you love Him because He first loved you. If you are walking in the light down here, it means you are going to love your brother also. It's impossible to say you love God and hate your brother.



How do you get to know somebody? By living with them day by day. The only way you can know the Lord Jesus Christ is by meeting with Him every day in His Word. That is where He is revealed. It's also where you learn how to overcome the wicked one (see Ephesians 6). In God's Word, we also learn how to live in a wicked world system, organized against God. (See also Ephesians 1:4, 2:2; Galatians 6:14; 2 Peter 2:20.) John says we are not to love it or be part of it. We still possess an old nature that is geared for this world, but we have a new nature, too, bought by the blood of Jesus.

Between you and this satanic world system, there stands a cross. Both are bidding for you to come to them. As a child of God, follow Jesus and glory in His Cross.

Stand strong, child of God.

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**NEXT: How can you know you're a true child of God?**

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7. Imagine you were to draw a picture of your old nature, which wants to sin and live like the world. What would it look like?

## LESSON 4

# DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 2:12-29**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 2:12-16**, **1 John 2:16-19**, **1 John 2:19-22**, and **1 John 2:23-29**

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*“Don’t love the world,”* 1 John 2:15 says. So does that mean Christians shouldn’t love people and nature and sunsets? Absolutely not. God loves His creation and so should we.

Don’t love the *kosmos*—the things in the world that oppose God. Three of those things John lists as temptations we face—the same temptations Satan brought to Eve (see Genesis 3:6) and to the Lord Jesus Christ (see Matthew 4:1-11). Satan hasn’t changed his tactics in all these years. He brings the same temptations to us, and we fall for it.

1. “The lust of the flesh.” Many things appeal to us physically, but the two we cave to fastest are temptations related to food and to sex. Being tempted isn’t sin—giving in to it is. The same is true of any other desire of the flesh.
2. “The lust of the eyes.” Satan showed Eve the pleasant tree God forbid them to eat. He also showed the Lord Jesus Christ all the kingdoms of this world which he tempted Him with. We live in an attractive world with all its pageantry and glory. But be careful what you look at! They are in Satan’s hands.

3. “The pride of life.” Most people pride themselves on something. It could be their legacies or looks or abilities—whatever makes us feel superior to someone else. Eve thought the tree could make her wise. Satan took the Lord Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and said, “*Cast yourself down. Thousands will witness it, and You will show Your superiority*” (see Matthew 4:5-6). But the Lord Jesus never did a miracle for His own glory.

*The lust of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life.* Do these three appeals sound familiar to you? When we make our goal what we eat or how we look or even what makes us seem more religious, it leads to a distorted view of life. These things are of the world, and they become deadly.

But they are passing away. We shouldn’t love them because God doesn’t love them. Someday He will destroy our enemies: The world, the flesh, and the devil. Don’t invest your energy in what is passing away. Instead, work at something permanent, that has stability—something that will last for eternity.

We live in “the last hour,” John says. The fact it has been the *last* time for a *long* time speaks to God’s mercy. This is the age when God calls out a people for His name. The Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7-8). Why the urgency about salvation? Life here is uncertain, and we are not promised tomorrow. Please respond in faith to God’s Word today.

The solemn and sobering truth is that many who profess to be Christians are not really saved. They may look the part, they might even be members of your church. They could have been baptized and celebrated the bread and the cup at the communion service. But the only way to tell if someone really is a child of God is if they continue in the faith. If they persevere through the highs and lows and remain with God, their faith is likely genuine. But if they eventually withdraw from the body of believers and go back into the world, they might never have really known the Lord.

Remember Judas? Right there at the first communion service sat a traitor, identified with the group of faithful disciples. Judas looked and acted like an apostle; he had power to perform miracles. The others didn’t identify him as a phony, but he was.



Some look as if they are true children of God, but the real test, of course, is the Word of God. Every one of us should ask ourselves:

- Have I really faced up to my sins in the light of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Have I come to God in repentance, owning my guilt and acknowledging my wicked heart?
- Have I cast myself on Him and Him only for my salvation?
- Have I evidence in my life of being a regenerate soul of God?
- Do I *love* the Word of God? Is it bread to me?
- Do I *love* the body of Christ, corporately and individually?
- And do I *love* the Lord Jesus Christ?

Consider these things seriously.

It's very important you really know you are a child of God. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some who had reason to believe they might not be children of God, he told them to test themselves to make sure they were solid in the faith. The same is true today for us. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourself regular checkups. Ask the Lord to give you firsthand evidence that He is in you. And if you fail the test, do something about it.

One critical testing point is what you do when you commit a sin. Do you continue in it? After a child of God has sinned, they go to God and cry out to Him in confession. They turn from that sin and start again.

God's child must hate sin. Don't take it lightly. It is not "just the way I am" or simply a weakness. God's children examine ourselves to see what kind of believer we really are. This is not meant to rob you of your assurance of salvation. In fact, seeing God assure you of your position in Him will strengthen your confidence in the end.

Some might say, "But I do so much for God, surely I'm His child." This is an issue of Law and grace. Law says: If a person does something, he will live. But grace says the opposite: If a person is alive, he will do something. That is, a person must have a life from God before he can live for God. He cannot live for God by the old nature.

The Law says, “Do,” but grace says, “Believe.”

The Law never works for us because it is impossible for the old nature to please God. We all have come short of the glory of God. John shows us the real test: Do I delight in the will of God? Do I love His commandments? If you are a child of God, you have a new nature, and now you want to please Him.

Here are some other considerations.

Though we know the blood of Christ covers us from all sin, we cannot walk with God and live in sin at the same time.

If you are His sheep, you will hear His voice. You are not boasting when you say you know you are saved; you are saying you have a wonderful Shepherd (John 10:27-28).

The child of God has someone dwelling in us who reveals to us the Word of God. If you really want to do business with God, if you really want to get right down to the nitty-gritty with Him, come to Him, ask for light, ask for guidance, and ask for His assurance. (Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-10.) The Holy Spirit will lead you through the Word of God, and then through the experiences God sends to you, you can grow up in God. Many a child of God grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

When John wrote this letter to the first century Christians, they had the gospel; they had the truth. This isn't anything new to them. But he wanted to encourage them and warn them about false teaching going out in that day. They had the truth, but now lies were coming into the church.

In these last days, the world boasts many antichrists. An “antichrist” is the title *Christ* and the preposition *anti*. *Anti* can mean “against” (as in, “I’m anti-something, I am against that thing”). *Anti* can also mean “instead of, a substitute.” In 1 John, the antichrists denied the deity of Christ (1 John 2:22; Matthew 24:5) and pretended to be Christ.

Antichrists are liars, working for the prince of liars, the devil. Liars do not tell the truth. They say Jesus is not God. *The Antichrist* of the last days will be the embodiment of *the Antichrist*. Today we can easily recognize antichrists—they deny Jesus the man is the Christ, the Messiah, the one who is God, the one whose name is Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the one who is pictured in the Old Testament.

Many world systems deny Jesus' deity today. They not only are against Him, but they imitate Him and try to take His place. In the early church it was Gnosticism that said Jesus was the son of Joseph and born like every other man. When an antichrist denies the Son, they also deny the Father. Jesus must be God for our salvation to be effective. If He is not God, then His death on the cross was for nothing. Humans can't die for the other's sin. He cannot be your Savior if He can't be His own Savior. It was necessary for God to become a man in order that we might have redemption.

If you say you believe in God and deny the deity of Christ, you really don't believe in the God of the Bible. He is the one who sent His Son into the world to die for our sins. And since Jesus Christ is the Son is God, He alone is the one who could make a satisfactory sacrifice to God for our sins. Had He been anyone else other than God, He Himself would have been a sinner.

But as we have heard about Jesus' incarnation in Bethlehem, about His life around the Sea of Galilee and Jerusalem and all points in between, and about His death and resurrection, we should continue in this faith. If you abide in Him, continue believing—that is the evidence you are a child of God.

A living faith rests in the One who came to this earth, God become man. Looking to Jesus is the only way we can know about God. And we *can* know Him! We can enjoy fellowship with Him (John 1:14; John 1:18). He promises us eternal life—that's the only kind of life God offers. If you lose it tomorrow or next week or next year, it isn't eternal life.

There will be people who try to lead you away from the truth. They will deny Jesus Christ is who He claims to be. They will seduce you into thinking against God. But you must hold on to the fact that God has promised you eternal life if you put your faith in Christ. Some false teachers will profess to have some superior knowledge or experience, but nothing else is needed except to rest on the promise of God.

You know Jesus Christ as your Savior—hold on to that. And now grow in grace and knowledge and enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Father. When you are saved, the Spirit of God anoints you to understand divine truth you could not understand before.

“Anointing” is the Greek word *charisma* meaning “to smear on,” like an ointment. In the Old Testament, by God's command, Israelite priests were anointed with oil. That anointing physically demonstrated they were

specially appointed by the Holy Spirit to perform a certain function. Today, we have been specially anointed by the Holy Spirit to make Jesus Christ's life observable to the world through our actions.

One of the Holy Spirit's ministries is to teach us. He guides us into all truth. The Lord Jesus, the great Teacher, said the Comforter will teach us all we can contain. The natural man isn't able to receive God's truth. They think it's foolishness. But the Spirit of God reveals spiritual things to us. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 14.)

When we get into the Word of God for ourselves, we give the Holy Spirit something to work with. The Lord wants us to stand on our two feet as we navigate God's Word and always be ready to answer anyone's question about the hope we have in Christ (see 1 Peter 3:15). Sadly, some people have been studying the Bible for years, but they never get anywhere. They might be learning, but they never come to the knowledge of the truth (see 2 Timothy 3:6-7). They aren't letting the Spirit of God be their Teacher. As you study the Word of God, ask the Spirit of God to teach you and lead you. If you don't understand something the first time, get down on your knees and say, "Lord, I miss the point. I don't understand this. Please help me." The Spirit of God can make His Word very real to you.

Your confidence in God's Word will protect you from false teachers and those who might make a big, splashy show. As the elect of God, you will not be deceived. Someday when the Antichrist is delivering false messages, you will not be tricked. Instead, as God's little child, you will follow His voice, not that of a false shepherd (John 10:27). We will hear His voice, and the Spirit of God will be our Teacher. This is so comforting! We need to test every teacher we hear. Ask the Holy Spirit, "Is what they're teaching the truth of God? Make it real to my heart, too. I want to know for myself whether it is true."

This communication is the fruit of "abiding in Christ." John says we are fellowshiping with Jesus when we are at home with Him. We live carefully—like He will be coming for us tomorrow. Though He has reserved the details for only Himself to know, we can be confident He is coming back for us. That confidence rubs off in how we live. False doctrine and false living go together; true doctrine and true living go together.

When you know you will one day stand in front of Jesus and give an account of your life, you live differently (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). The issue of your salvation may already be settled because we are His children and in His presence, but still being decided are the issues of rewards and recognition.

Living a godly life is the final proof of your salvation. The Word of God is the real test. God's children look like their Father. If they don't take after the Father, they must not be the Father's children. It's just as simple as that.

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**NEXT: Learn how your neighbors will know you're God's child.**

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## LESSON 4



# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What is necessary to have victory over the things which tempt our flesh?
2. Why can what we see so easily lead us into temptation?
3. What areas of your life are susceptible to pride?

4. Perseverance is important to the Christian life. What can you do to grow in perseverance?

5. What does our attitude about sin tell us about our salvation?

6. At the core of Christian faith is right thinking about who Jesus is. How can you make right theology a focus in your Christian walk?

7. Imagine you were describing a false teacher like you would describe a criminal you had seen commit a crime to the police. What would that description sound like?



## LESSON 5

# ALL ABOUT LOVE



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 2:29–3:6**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](https://www.TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 2** and **1 John 2:29–3:6**

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It's one thing to say we know Jesus Christ as our Savior and quite another to live a life that shows it. The truth is, we recognize other believers by their lives and not by their lips. Righteousness is a family characteristic of the Father and His children. God's children take after their Father—they have *His* characteristics.

The Father gives us such love—so much that we can now be called His children. The world can't begin to understand us, because it didn't understand Him. Only God's Spirit can make our salvation real to us. Only He confirms it to our hearts with spiritual insight. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can say emphatically, "I am a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ." It's not a future thing—it's a right now thing, and you can be glad and constantly thank Him you are His child. This isn't boasting in ourselves; this is boasting in our wonderful Shepherd.

The kind of love God gives us is a strange, unusual love. He demonstrated it by asking His Son to die for us. This love is the greatest motivating force in the world. It drives the human family. It's a beautiful thing when human love mirrors God's kind of love. His love for us far exceeds anything we experience with each other.

God's love motivates the true child of God to obey God's Word. It makes us want to live for God and to please Him. Because of His love, we make tremendous sacrifices for each other. We want to live it out.

If you have come by faith to Jesus Christ as your Savior, do you realize you are God's child *right now*? Your salvation is in three tenses: You have been saved, you are being saved, and you will be saved.

1. *You have been saved.* The moment you trust Christ you receive everlasting life, and you will never be any more saved than you are the moment you trust Him. You are born into God's family. (See John 5:24.)
2. *You are being saved.* If you are God's child, you will obey Him and you will grow, develop, and continue on in the Christian faith. You are in the process of being saved. (See also Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 3:18.)
3. *You will be saved.* When the Lord Jesus comes again for His own, you will experience the final stage of your salvation. Sin will no longer have power over you, and you will be with the Lord forever.

This process should make us very glad—and also very humble. Truth is, we all should be farther along in our sanctification process than we are. But don't be discouraged, because someday when we see the glorified Jesus, we shall be like Him—not equal to Him, but He will make us like Him in our own way, with our own personalities, individualities, selves. He'll not destroy the person you are, but will bring you up to your full measure—your best self. Even today He's shaping your heart and your character and will yet perform a work in you that will result in a total makeover. A real heart transformation.

All of us who look forward to Jesus' return stay ready for His appearing any moment. We continue in the faith, live a pure life, following His life as our model. When faced with difficult things, remember that someday you will be like Him, and this reminder will help you make good decisions here and now. What a great incentive for holy living. If you're painfully aware of how you fail His righteousness today, don't be too discouraged, nor be discouraged with each other. We are not so wonderful now, but we'll hardly recognize ourselves someday.

This hope we have in someday being like Christ is represented in the Christian's two natures today. We were born with a sinful nature and we have a spiritual nature God gives us at the moment of our salvation.

# Righteousness

is a family characteristic  
of the Father and His children.

God's children take after their Father—  
they have His characteristics.



THRU the BIBLE

We are born with a nature that naturally rebels against God. When we sin, we break God's laws of living. The person without Christ continually and habitually lives in their sin. Obsessed with pleasing themselves, they don't give a thought to pleasing God (see Romans 8:5). God gave us the Law so we could recognize this rebellion in ourselves. The rules were never meant to provide a way to salvation. Instead, they prove to us we are sinners and that we need Him.

So how are you doing in this battle? Do you pursue the things that please God? Or do you constantly try to please yourself? Ask Him to show you your heart and He will. You can't have fellowship with God and continually pursue carnal things. If your heart's desire is to go after your own way, ask yourself if you are really a Christian.

Only the Lord Jesus can take away sin. He came for that purpose (see John 1:29). He was without sin and so is the only one able to remove the guilt of our sin. His death was redemptive; it paid the price of our sin's penalty (see John 3:16).

When you become God's child, Jesus takes away the practice of sin in your life. He died so He could deliver us from the *power* of sin right here and now. In our new nature, we are free from the habit of sinning. We can live for Him today. We are positionally in Christ and also practically placed in Him.

If you abide in Him in fellowship and service, you must give sin up. If you go off to the pigpen (and live by your old nature), and if you stay in that pigpen, you never were God's child. You can't be happy living in sin. Our new nature won't continue in sin. The reason the prodigal son couldn't stay in the pigpen is that he wasn't a pig. He was a son of the Father, and he longed for the Father's house. If you are a child of God, you will want to be in the Father's house—you will *long* for it.

God's children have their Father's nature. If you are God's child, you won't be content in a sinful state. God will deliver you from sin's power if you ask Him to—go ahead and call on Him and trust Him to remove sin's control on your life.

The reason we have a sinful nature today is because of the devil. He led our first parents into sin. When Jesus stood before the religious rulers of His day, He told them, "*You are the children of your father, the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does*" (John 8:44). Isn't it interesting that we take after our father? If your father is the devil, then you will act like him. If your father is our heavenly Father, then you have His nature and you will act like Him. If you keep on sinning, it shows you belong to Satan, who started out

sinning and has been at it ever since. He is in constant rebellion against God. But Jesus, the Son of God, came to destroy his works. Only Jesus Christ can deliver you. Go to Him with your struggle with sin. He is the Great Physician and will heal you. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and its penalty.

Since you've trusted Christ, your sins are behind you, and you are saved in Him. Your sins will never again be an issue of your salvation because you have trusted Him (see Hebrews 7:26; 1 John 3:5). Jesus died in order to destroy the devil's work and to make it possible for us to live the Christian life.

When a child of God sins, we have Jesus as our advocate with the Father. If we confess our sins to Him, we can trust Him to forgive us and cleanse us from every wrong. God does this because Jesus Christ died to wash away our sins.

The question is: Have you been *born of God*? The Bible teaches the security of believers, but there's also the insecurity of make-believers. Take an inventory of your life. Examine your own heart and see whether you really believe in the name of Jesus Christ and trust Him to have taken the penalty of your sin and forgiven you and placed you in the beloved. Are you really a child of God? Do you long after Him? Want His life to transform your life? There will be things you have to give up. You can't live like the devil, in rebellion with God, because you belong to Your Father.

When we received a new nature, we did not lose our old nature—that's the problem. Only the Spirit of God can deliver you from your habit of sinning. If you recognize that you are helpless and hopeless, if some sin binds you down, spoils your life, robs you of your joy, and you are miserable, then go to Him and ask Him to deliver you from it—if you *want* to be delivered. If you want to get rid of that sin, if you really mean business with Him, then He means business with you.

There are two families in the world. Contrary to what we hear from the world, the Bible doesn't teach the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. We are not "all God's children." God's children are only those who turn in faith and believe on Jesus Christ to be their Savior (see Romans 1:16). God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who He is, and we know who we are: Father and children.

God knows our hearts and knows whether or not we have really been born again and are His children. But our neighbors next door don't know that. The only way for them to know we belong to God is for the life of God to be demonstrated in us. It's not necessarily evident in what we say; God's life is made obvious by our living.

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**NEXT: There's a battle between your two natures.  
Which one is winning in your life and heart today?**

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## LESSON 5

# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How is the kind of love God gives different from the concept of love that the people in your culture possess?
2. What does it tell us about ourselves that, even though we have been saved, we are also being saved, and one day will be saved as well?
3. If God showed you your heart, what do you think you would see?

4. Why do we, as saved children of God, so desperately desire to go back to sin, and what can be done about it?
  
5. Our actions reveal our family resemblance. What actions should you be doing to look more like your heavenly Father?
  
6. Being a part of God's family is so important that we should constantly be seeking others to add to our family. Who in your life needs to know about God's desire to bring them into His family?



7. Imagine you were to write a description of what Christians loving each other looks like. How would you describe it?

## LESSON 6

# WHICH NATURE WINS YOUR HEART?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 3**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](https://www.TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 3:1-9**, **1 John 3:8-12**, **1 John 3:10-17**, and **1 John 3:17-4:1**

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If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have two natures.

You have a new nature. On a good day, you bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc. You experience an unexplainable peace and joy of the Lord.

However, that could all change on a dime.

Tomorrow you might feel down in the dumps. You know you ought not be there, but it sometimes happens. That's when you're living in the old nature. You can be mean and petty and selfish. We all have that old nature. We never get rid of it in this life, and we all come short of the glory of God. That old nature also bears fruit, called the works of the flesh, and it's rotten to the core.

Just as there's no good in the old nature, there's no power in the new nature. You must have help. No matter who you are, you can't live the Christian life on your own. You need to learn to walk in the Spirit (see Galatians 5). Only when the Spirit of God works in you can you produce that good fruit. Jesus *wants* us to ask for His help, and He wants us to produce fruit (see John 15:1-2). He also tells us that He will prune us to get good fruit.

You can tell which nature is in control by looking at the fruit in someone's life (see Matthew 7:20). We are fruit inspectors. When you look at a fellow believer in Jesus Christ, two things should be immediately obvious: They are trying to walk God's way and don't make a practice of sin. If a person is not trying to live for God, they are not a child of God. That is a strong statement, but the Spirit of God said it (see 1 John 3:10).

So that's the first way to tell the difference between God's children and the devil's children: They try to live for God. The second mark is they try to love their brother and sister in Christ. It's a simple test.

Do you love other Christians? If you are a child of God, you will try.

Three Greek words are translated by our one English word "love." The first is *eros*, having to do with sex. This word isn't used in the New Testament. The second word, *phileo*, means "friendship, a brotherly kind of love." The third word, the highest word, is *agapao*. That is God's love described in John 3:16 and the kind of love we should show our Christian brothers and sisters.

Agape love means you have a concern for another; you want to be helpful. It does not mean you have to hug him or hang with him. Yours is a love that acts for their good.

When John wrote this to the church, he said in effect, "*This isn't new information.*" They had heard this before. Jesus had taught it and so had the other apostles. (See John 13:35.)

John also told them not to be surprised if the world doesn't accept us, the followers of Jesus, because they didn't accept Him. That's what Jesus warned them about (John 15:18-19). John makes it very clear all the way through this epistle that he is merely passing along what the Lord Jesus Himself gave to him.

As children of God, accept that the world will hate us. The Cross is an offense to the world. We just need to make sure the world is objecting to Jesus, and not to us. Many Christians act out and are rejected, not because they are Christians, but because they are simply obnoxious. Don't act that way. Instead, be known for your love.

This trademark of love is proof that we've "passed from death to life" (1 John 3:14).

We can *know* whether or not we are God's child simply by our concern and love for our Christian brothers and sisters. That's a proof of our salvation. But if you hate your brother, it's as good as murder, John said quoting Jesus (1 John 3:15, Matthew 5:21-22). Envy and jealousy lead to hatred, and hatred is murder. How many murderers are around today? By this standard from God, more murderers are out of jail than in jail. (This passage doesn't teach that an actual murderer cannot be saved. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for *all* sins—even taking someone's life. However, when a man is saved, he will no longer live in hatred.)

So, we as Christians have two natures—an old one and a new one. The new nature wants to please God. Our old nature still thinks we can do it our way. Don't feel like praying? That's your old nature talking, thinking it doesn't need God. In our natural state, we are unable to please God; the carnal mind is at war against Him. Which is true of a believer? Is he prone to *wander*, or is he prone to *worship*? Likely both are true.

How wonderful it is we have God's example of love to follow. The real proof that God loves us is when He gave His Son to die for us. With Jesus as our example, we now should be willing to lay down our lives for the brothers.

How does this kind of love in action work itself out? Sacrificially. We're not just out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it, then do it. God is the one who gave you plenty, now use it to help His people. It may not be necessary to give our lives, but certainly it is necessary to give of our substance.

Christianity is a love relationship. Real love gets into the action. It demonstrates love by *doing* something for another (rather than just talking sweet). Our tongue is very good at running ahead of our feet, but true Christianity is a matter of the heart and not of the head or the tongue. If we are children of God, we will demonstrate this kind of love.

When your life pleases God, you can expect Him to hear and answer your prayer. We need that desperately today. God gives you an assurance in your heart that you are in His will when you use your resources to get the things He wants done. If you're doing that you will also have that same assurance when you stand before Him someday.





**True Christianity**  
***is a matter of the heart***

and not of the head or the tongue.

If we are children of God,  
we will demonstrate love.



THRU the BIBLE



What if we're not doing what we should be doing?—have we lost our salvation or maybe we were never saved? If our hearts condemn us, John assures us, God is greater than our hearts, greater than our lack of assurance. God will hear our prayer.

He's a wonderful God. When we fail Him, He won't fail us. You may not have any assurance when you go before Him. Many Christians come to God empty-handed: "I have done nothing for You, Lord, yet I come to You in prayer." God is greater than your heart; He will hear your prayer. You may not have any assurance because you've failed Him, but He is greater than your heart, and He knows you, and He knows you are sincere. You can depend on Him—just keep going to Him.

Love in action gives assurance in prayer. When persecution first broke out for the early church and the apostles were warned to stop preaching the name of Jesus, they reported this to the other Christians, and the group went to God in prayer. They didn't pray the persecution would stop. They began their prayer by saying, "Lord, You are God ...." *You are strong, You are sovereign* .... They acknowledged their heavenly Father is God. He *does* run this universe, and He *is* in charge. John says that when we obey God's orders, follow His plans, and make it our mission to please Him, we receive whatever we ask Him for. His first order is that we should put our trust in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love each other—just like Jesus said His followers do. His love characterizes our life, and His Spirit—alive in every child of God—makes these things real to our hearts.

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**NEXT: We're walking in the devil's territory, and he has teachers, too. Learn the two tests for determining if someone is a false teacher or a child of God.**

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## LESSON 6



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How much time do you spend living in the old nature on an average day? Would it be often, sometimes, occasionally, frequently, rarely, or something else?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What nature a person follows produces fruit in their lives, and we may not know their hearts, but we can inspect their fruits. If someone inspected the fruit in your life, what would they conclude?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Who do you know who is a good example of loving other Christians? What can you learn from this person that you can copy?





7. Imagine you could go back in time and talk to John. If you asked him, "How did you love people like you are telling others to do in your letter?" what do you think his answer would be?

## LESSON 7

# HOW CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 4:1-9**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](https://www.TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 4:1-3** and **1 John 4:4-9**

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Today you will walk in the devil's territory. You will deal with the spirit world none of us know too much about, which is why it's critical to ask the Lord for the correct balance in studying it. It's dangerous to be overly preoccupied with the occult but equally dangerous to dismiss it. The balance is found in focusing on what the Bible says.

When the Bible teaches about the spirit world, it's always in the context of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives. (See Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:7,14.) In John's first letter, we are warned against false teachers and prophets in context of how God's Spirit indwells us and anoints us to understand the things of God. John puts up a caution sign: Exercise love with judgment and knowledge. Love believers, but just make sure they are not false teachers.

The spiritual world is not our natural territory—which is why we must test and prove whether a spirit is from God and why we need to put on the whole armor of God as we search it. Demonism is all around us today, but so are God's army of good angels eager to serve Him. The contingent of fallen angels, called demons and spirits, are engaged in this gigantic battle that is beyond the flesh, a battle fought in the spiritual realm (Jude 6; Matthew 8:28-29; Ephesians 6:12). Scripture teaches both God and the devil have well organized armies—generals at the top, lieutenant colonels, and then on down to sergeants, corporals, and ordinary soldiers.

John warns us to be aware of the spiritual battle raging around us and to be careful since many who teach are taking their instructions from hell. Just because someone says they are from the Lord doesn't mean we should be quick to embrace what they teach. A false teacher might be more dangerous than a rattlesnake because of their false doctrine. They might carry a big Bible but not be teaching its truth.

How do you know the difference between godly teaching and heresy?

Test them in this simple way: Welcome those who teach Jesus Christ as God-become-man. The teacher who denies this fact isn't from God.

You have to go back to Bethlehem, where it all begins. In Bethlehem, Jesus Christ was born, took on flesh, and began His journey living with us as the God-man. Calvary and the Garden Tomb mean nothing unless Jesus is who He claimed to be—virgin born and God in the flesh.

A false teacher will deny Jesus Christ is God. They may talk nicely about Him—what a great teacher He was, a religious genius, a superstar! They say He probably knew God better than any other man. But ask them if He was *God manifested in the flesh and they'll shrink away*. False teachers tear Him down by complimenting Him as a man but denying Jesus is who He claimed to be: *God of very God*.

John speaks of Jesus as “the Word” in his Gospel (John 1:1). He is God, creator of all things. God became flesh at the Incarnation in Bethlehem. If you deny the Incarnation, the deity of Christ, then you deny His work on the cross, because it all rests on who He is.

The heresy, Gnosticism, was taught when John wrote this letter. This false teaching said the Spirit of God came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at Calvary. But the Word of God says the baby born in Bethlehem was more than a remarkable baby, that His death on the cross was not an ordinary death, and that when He rose from the dead, He rose bodily.

Isaiah the prophet wrote, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ...” (Isaiah 9:6). The child is *born*, but the Son is *given*. The Son came out of eternity, the Ancient of Days; but the Child, His humanity, was conceived in the virgin's womb. He arrived in Bethlehem where a few shepherds and wise men came to worship Him. He was more than just a precocious child—He is the precious Prince of Peace who makes peace by the blood of His cross and someday will bring peace to our war-weary world.

John warns us to beware of how false teachers deny Jesus is God in the flesh. That's why the virgin birth is so important. Some ask, "Can you be a Christian and deny the virgin birth?" When you destroy the virgin birth, you destroy His death upon the cross for the sins of the world and His bodily resurrection—in other words, you wreck the Christian faith. When someone denies the virgin birth today, you can be sure you're listening to a false teacher.

If you want to find out if someone is a false teacher, find out what they believe about Jesus Christ. If they deny Jesus is God, then you know they are teaching from a different authority, from an antichrist.

John is the only writer who mentions the Antichrist and only here in this letter (see 1 John 2:18, 22). As we studied earlier, *anti* can mean either "against" or "instead of," like an imitation, pretending to be Christ.

Revelation 13 speaks of two beasts in the end time. The first is a political ruler—the Antichrist to rule the world, a world dictator. The other is a religious ruler, called the false prophet. He will come like a lamb, but underneath he is a wolf—he will imitate Christ. It will take these two men to fulfill all that is said in Scripture about the Antichrist. The false teachers moving today are pushing the world closer and closer to that end day, preparing the world for the Antichrist to finally appear. The religious ruler will pull all the religions of the world under his leadership; the same for the political world. This Antichrist will bring peace to the world temporarily, but then it will be the most frightful time the world has ever seen.

There is a way to not be taken in by satanic teaching or by a false teacher who denies Jesus' deity. As a child of God, you can ask for God's help. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you and teach you. If you are in fellowship with Him, the Spirit of God will make the issue clear to you. You don't need an angel to appear to you tonight to tell you what you need to know. Rather, you need the Holy Spirit who indwells you to teach you through His Word. However, you can't stay away from the Bible, be ignorant of it, ignore it, and expect the Spirit of God to lead you. He opens our hearts through His Word and protects us from this world. We live in a wicked world and need to be warned about false teaching all around us. Test every teaching by the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and guide.

False teachers do get a following. They're usually attractive, with charisma, and perform well on stage; but stay away from them, because what they teach is contrary to Christ. They appeal to the flesh and people respond.

Cain—Abel’s brother, Adam and Eve’s firstborn—was not righteous and was not God’s child. It doesn’t say Cain wasn’t *religious*. He brought a beautiful offering to God—the fruit of the field. Abel’s offering was dead and bloody. However, Abel’s offering is the one God accepted because it recognized our sin and our need of a Savior. Cain didn’t recognize that at all—the flesh depends on itself, not on God.

Having warned us against false teachers, John returns now to the theme of this section: Believers in God are to love one another.

This kind of love is a supernatural love, not necessarily a social one. The Holy Spirit puts God’s love in our hearts, and only He can help us extend it to others.

This is the second test of whether or not you are a child of God. Do you love other believers?

If you say, “Well, I love *some* of them,” then you’re moving in the right direction. Some believers can be very unlovely. If we love those who love us—how hard is that? (See Matthew 5:46.) John reminds us that Jesus said, “*If you love me, you ought to love each other.*” And, “*Love one another like I’ve loved you*” (John 14:15; 15:12).

Do you love other believers? Do you have a concern for them? Are you helping them, as you can? Do you want to get His Word out to as many people as you can? Do you want to serve Him?

This is the bedrock of it all: Do you love God? Do you love other believers?

If you wonder how God is loving you, just look at Jesus’ cross at Calvary—you’ll find God’s love there. Jesus proved God’s love when He willingly laid down His life for us. (See Romans 5:6-8.) God loved you when you were still a *sinner*, completely lost and absolutely unlovely. The explanation of this love is found in Him and not in us. His death gives us life.

Jesus—God the Father’s unique, eternal Son—is our propitiation. This is a great word, meaning “mercy seat.” It is the same as the Old Testament word *atonement*, meaning “to cover.”

In the Old Testament tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies, there stood the ark of the covenant. It was a box of acacia wood, covered inside and out with gold. The lid was crowned with two cherubim of solid gold, facing each other and looking down. That lid was called the mercy seat.

Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the nation of Israel met God in the Holy of Holies. The high priest went into the Holy of Holies with blood to be sprinkled on the mercy seat. This blood allowed man to meet with God—it was the only way. God loved them but wasn't sloppy with His affection. He didn't say, "Just come to Me any way you want." No, there was just one way: Through blood on the mercy seat. That meant God accepted the nation for another year. They would need to go through it again the next year.

The Lord Jesus Christ is called "the propitiation for our sins"—He is our mercy seat. Because He died for our sins, we can come boldly to God's throne of grace. That throne is now covered with grace, because there is *mercy* there for us. That is what Christ did and how God demonstrated His love for us.

Twice in this letter John defines God as love (1 John 4:8, 16). It doesn't say God is mercy. Or God *is* grace. Or even God *is* justice.

But you can say God *is* love. However, God does not save us by love. He *can't* just open the back door of heaven and slip us in under cover of darkness because He loves us. And He can't let down the bars of heaven and bring us in the front door. God can't do that, because also God *is* holy and righteous. Our sin had to be dealt with, because He always does what's right. When God gave His Son to die on the cross for us, He paid the penalty for our sin so now a holy God can reach down and save us.

God saves us because of Jesus' sacrifice. Christ is the mercy seat, where God reveals His love (see John 3:16). He loved us first. God didn't give His Son for us because we were attractive or good or because we promised to do something for Him. He loved us while we were at our worst (see Romans 5:8). God loved us and made a way for us, if we will accept it (see John 14:6). You either come His way, or you can't come at all.

This is so important to understand. God is love, but that doesn't mean everything will work out alright for everyone and we will ultimately all go to heaven. That is a perversion of grace. The truth is, the lost are going to a lost eternity and the saved are going to a saved eternity. Is life going to work out alright for you? It will if you come God's way. God loved us so much He gave His Son as a "mercy seat" for our sins. Come His way.

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**NEXT: The world is hungry for love, yet it doesn't know what love is. They don't know how wonderful God is, but we can make Him known. Find out how.**

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4. What we do is clearly important to John, but what we think and believe is just as important. How can you better allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in your thinking?
5. If false teachers appeal to the flesh, what would true teaching appeal to?
6. The gospel will always lead us to loving God and people, even if those people aren't always lovable. Who might the Spirit be prompting you to work harder at loving?



7. Think of life as an Israelite waiting outside the temple for the high priest to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat every year. What would the message that God had offered His only Son as the final sacrifice for sins mean to you?

## LESSON 8

# ALL ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 4:7-21**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 4:7-11** and **1 John 4:12-21**

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“No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Really? What about Adam who walked with God in the Garden of Eden? And Moses who talked with God face to face and was hidden in the cleft of the rock as He went by? What about Isaiah who said, “In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). Ezekiel also had visions of God, and the Lord appeared to Daniel and to others. How could John say, “No one has seen God at any time”?

The answer, of course, follows in John’s explanation. “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18)—that is, He has *exegeted* Him. When God appeared to people in the Old Testament, they did not see God, for He is a Spirit; they saw a *theophany*. That is, God made Himself known to them, but He did not reveal Himself in all of His fullness. The Lord Jesus said to Philip, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). But how did they see Him? Jesus grew to manhood in Nazareth, veiled in human flesh—so they did not know He was the Son of God. No man has seen God in all of His fullness.

We may not have seen God in His fullness even today, but God makes Himself known through believers loving each other. The world does not see Jesus as He is presented in the Word of God, so the only way it will know of God’s

love is through the lives of believers who live for Him. None of us knew about God's love until God showed it to us on the cross when Christ died. The Holy Spirit makes it real to us today. (See Romans 5:5, 8.)

Since it's still true that no one seeks after God, God has come down seeking us. He made Himself known to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. All we know about God is what we know in the person of Jesus Christ. If we want to know what God thinks or feels about certain things, we follow the Lord Jesus and listen to Him. We can know what God is thinking, we can feel His heartbeat. We know how He feels at a funeral, for the Bible tells us how "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). We know how He feels about little children because He took them up in His arms and blessed them (Luke 18:15-16). We can know these things about God because the Lord came to make Him known.

How can this wicked world we live in know God? We can show them God in our actions. The world is hungry for love; yet it doesn't know what love is. They don't know how wonderful God is, but we can make Him known.

Since God's Spirit has given us life from His life, His love is developed in us. The world sees God in us and is drawn to Him. We can't work up this love in ourselves; the Spirit who lives in every believer must produce it in our hearts. Our natural bent is to strike out at whoever strikes us, but when we are filled by God's Spirit, we can make His love known to the world through our witness of Jesus Christ's work in us.

This is the gospel witness. This is our message to give. The purpose of our love is to reveal Jesus Christ to a lost world of sinners. We can confess to them all Jesus has done for us—but it begins with declaring who Jesus as the Son of God. If He is not who He said He was, His death and resurrection are meaningless. But the evidence is that He did rise from the dead, and the proof of it is that He was virgin born—these truths are equally critical. Jesus is who He said. Because of that, He can say to you today (if you hear His voice and believe on Him) you will be saved.

This love we know from God and the love we embrace and share with others are inextricably intertwined and interwoven together. You simply cannot say you are God's child and you love Him and turn around and hate someone. If we do not love our brother, then we do not love God either. God commanded us to love even if you don't feel like it or want to. *"Because I love, you are to love."*

In Christ, you have  
**nothing to fear.**

Relax and enjoy your

salvation.



THRU the BIBLE

When we obey Him, His life and love in us is made full and complete so we can be bold in sharing His love with the world. As Jesus is, so are we in this world. In other words, we become just like Him. He was raised from the dead and has life, and we have that life too. He is at God's right hand interceding for us. We are safe in Christ and are fully accepted in the Beloved.

Do you hear that? In Christ, you have nothing to fear. There's no judgment coming for you—all your debts were settled when Christ died for you. Relax and enjoy your salvation. Joy stems from love, and if you have love for the Lord Jesus, for God, and for others, then fear has been cast out.

And of course, this all began with God. He loved us first. He loved us when we were unlovely. He is worth loving. The Lamb of God is worthy of all of our love, all of our devotion, all of our service.

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**NEXT: Jesus said there is a distinguishing mark of anyone who follows Him. What is it, and how do you know you have it?**

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## LESSON 8

# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Why was it necessary for Jesus to show us God in the flesh?
2. The task of loving people fulfills the same role of showing God to people as Jesus coming in the flesh. What effect does that have on your desire to love other people?
3. The only way the world will know about God is if we make Him known. How should that change the way we think about and interact with those around us?

4. In order for us to love like God intends, that love has to be something the Holy Spirit produces in us. Are there ways you need to cooperate with the Spirit more to produce this kind of love?
5. The resurrection is a historical fact, but we can never let it become just a historical fact in our lives. What change has Jesus' resurrection made in your life?
6. Love and fear cannot coexist. What fears do you have in your life which love needs to conquer?

7. How do you think John's having witnessed the risen Christ with his own eyes, rather than having heard about it from someone else, impacted the way he thought about the Christian life?



## LESSON 9

# WHEN HIS LIFE IS YOUR LIFE



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 5:1-9**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 5:1-4** and **1 John 5:4-6**

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In our study of this wonderful letter from John to the body of Christ, we learn three great definitions of God: “God is light” (1 John 1), “God is love” (1 John 2-3), and “God is life” (1 John 5).

God is life, and our life in Him comes through being born of God. You become a child of God through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In his Gospel, John wrote that if you believe on Him, Jesus gives you the power (that is, the right, the authority) to become the sons of God, even to those who don’t do any more nor less than simply believe on His name (see John 1:12). When you trust Christ, you trust who He is as well as what He did. What He did has no value if He is not who He said He was.

As we’ve studied previously, Jesus’ virgin birth is essential. Who is this that died for the sins of the world? Jesus was not an ordinary man—he would then be sinful and couldn’t even save Himself. But to believe that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, produces the new birth.

When you have been born again, how do you know? Does it come with some great, overwhelming experience? Well, some experience that, but it’s not typical.

When you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born again, and God becomes your heavenly Father. You are His and you will love Him. But it doesn't stop there—you also will love God's other children. Jesus said this love is the distinguishing mark of anyone who follows Him (John 13:35).

You *are* born again when you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, and the proof of it is that you love God and you love His other children because they are your brothers and sisters. This cannot be confined to a certain denomination, church, race, clique, or group. The one who is born again will love others who are born again.

How can you be sure you are saved? John offers some evidences that you are a child of God.

1. You want to do what's right (1 John 2:29). You will fail sometimes, but your habit is to do right in order to please God.
2. You don't make sin a lifestyle (John 3:9). You don't live in it or revel in it. Your practice is to not do wrong. We couldn't help it before we had God's Spirit to give us power, but now we live differently than our natural bent.
3. You love other Christians (1 John 4:7). Do you have concern for them? This test will give you confidence you are born of God.
4. You overcome the world (1 John 5:4). The "world" here is the *cosmos*, that is, the world with all of its organizations, all of its governments, all of its selfishness, its greed, its sorrow, its sickness, and its awful sin. Who can conquer the world except the man who really believes Jesus is God's Son?
5. You chose to live close to God so He can protect you from Satan (1 John 5:18). You don't intentionally sin and put yourself in a place where the evil one can reach you. The devil can't lay a hand on us when we are held firmly by God; it's only the people of the world who continue in the grip of the evil one.

Loving God and His children, obedience to what Jesus taught us, and living in truth are birthmarks of God's child. Just in 1 Thessalonians 5 alone, we get over 22 marching orders from God. Every child of God wants to keep these commandments as the practice of our lives because we know it pleases God and leads to sweet fellowship with Him. These commands are not burdensome or heavy. They may not be easy to keep, but God helps us, and they're not a burden to keep at all through love. John especially calls out our loving concern for other Christians as a sign we are His.

Another sign that we are His is that we have victory over the world. How can we do that? What overcomes the world? Our faith. Our faith saves us, and it is faith that keeps us. We are saved by faith; we walk by faith. We are born children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and faith is the only way in which we can overcome this world.

We have enemies in this battle (1 John 2:15). We can very easily be trapped by the world, by the flesh, and by the devil, who has been a liar from the beginning. Even today he deceives us and works to gain an advantage over us. How can we have victory over these enemies? Surprisingly, we don't win by fighting. Our strategy is to believe God.

We are saved by faith, and the only way to overcome this world is by faith. When you really trust Christ, your daily living is not a question of your own power, but you are kept by the power of God through faith. We have faith in Christ for salvation in the future and faith in Christ for salvation from the world here and now.

## HOW CAN WE BE SURE?

John was present at Jesus' crucifixion. He watched it all from the front row and tells us something no one else saw. When a soldier tested to see if Jesus was dead, he pushed the spear into His side, and there came out blood and water (John 19:33-35).

Here in his epistle, John applies what this means. He says first that Jesus came by water. When Jesus taught Nicodemus, He said no one enters God's kingdom unless they are born with water and the Holy Spirit (see John 3:5). The water is the living Word applied by the Spirit of God, and blood refers to Jesus Christ's sacrificial death.

## THE SPIRIT MAKES THESE TRUTHS LIVE

The Lord Jesus told the disciples that between His death and resurrection and the day of Pentecost, they were to wait in Jerusalem and do nothing. They were not to witness of Him—why? Because they couldn't witness effectually without the Holy Spirit.

If anyone can be saved, not only is Jesus Christ's redemptive death essential, but also the Spirit of God must be at work in our hearts and lives. Christ died for our sins, but the Spirit of God makes that real to us. He's the only one who can.

Our salvation is the work of both heaven and earth. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit—as three-in-One—bear witness in heaven. And on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood agree in one purpose: Presenting Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world who shed His blood upon Calvary and paid the penalty for our sins.

You are reading this—written sometime in the past by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit is applying His Word to your heart. His witness is that you would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and then grow in His grace and knowledge of the truth.

How do you come to this knowledge? Through the Word of God. The Word of God is the only thing that can clean up your life even as a believer, and it is the only thing that will keep you clean.

The only true miracle cleansing agent in the world today is the Word of God. For the Word of God presents Christ who shed His blood for your sins and my sins. These three bear witness on earth—the Spirit uses the water of the Word and applies the blood for our salvation. These three all agree in one—that is, they want to get you saved and keep you saved.

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**NEXT: There is really only one question worth answering:  
Do you have Jesus?**

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LESSON 9

**FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. What do the three definitions of God—God is light, God is love, and God is life—tell us about Him?
2. If God is life for those who believe in Him, what does that tell us about those who have not believed?
3. Being born again into God's family should change our affections; we should love God and His people. Examine what you love. Does it reflect being a member of God's family?

4. Our relationship to sin is an indicator of our relationship with God. Are there sin patterns in your life that the Holy Spirit has been working in your life to change? What needs to happen for you to overcome these sins?
5. The most important thing we can do as Christians is to continue in the faith. What challenges your faith and what encourages it?
6. John seems fond of comparing salvation to birth. How could thinking about salvation in these terms teach us about God and ourselves?

7. So much of John's letter tells us of the importance of the Holy Spirit. Imagine you could interview the Holy Spirit and ask Him questions about His work in your life. What would you ask Him?

## LESSON 10

# DO YOU KNOW HIM?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 John 5:6-21**



Listen at [TTB.org/1John](http://TTB.org/1John) to **1 John 5:6-12** and **1 John 5:13-21**

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Many people believe what they hear in the media. *If it's online, or in print, or on TV, then it must be true.* Too bad many of those people don't believe what God says about His Son, Jesus Christ, and they don't believe what God says about their own hearts. In essence, they call God a liar.

What is God's message? It's good news! Jesus Christ died on the cross so that you can have life in Him through the forgiveness of your sins.

If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells you, and He testifies that these things are true. When you hear the Word of God, you accept it because the Spirit bears witness you are hearing the Word of God.

When you don't believe God, you add to your other sins by implying He is a liar. God says, *"Trust Christ, and I'll save you."* If you say, "I don't need Christ to be saved," then you deny the truth of what God has said.

It boils down to this one point. This is the gospel in a nutshell. This is the simplest test:

***He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*** -1 John 5:12



Do you have Jesus? Is He your Savior? Are you trusting Him in such a way that no one on earth or in heaven can shake your confidence in Him? This is where your life begins. If you haven't come to this point, you haven't come anywhere at all. He's our lifeboat. He's our lifeline. He's our only hope. We are lost without Him, but if we have Him, we have life.

"He who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Can it be clearer than that? Forget about religion. Forget about all this churchianity. The important thing is: *Do you have Jesus? Is He your Savior?*

This is why John has emphasized Jesus as the Son of God. Do you know Him? He is wonderful. He is God made known in the flesh. He is the only one who can save us. He is absolutely unique. There is no one else like Him. He's the only begotten Son of God. He died upon the cross because He alone could pay the penalty for our sins. He rose again, and He is living right this moment at God's right hand for us. He is the living Christ. Do you have Him today as your Savior? That is the only question you need to answer. If you have Him, you have life—you are saved.

If you don't have Him, the only thing keeping you from Him is the sin in your life you don't want to give up. That decision will keep you from going to God.

John had two reasons for writing this letter. He says, "*I'm writing to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*" (see John 20:31).

He says if you *believe* on the name of the Son of God—that's salvation—and to continue to be sure you believe in the name of Jesus—that's assurance. If you believe in Christ, then you have life—John wants you to know that. You honor God when you trust what He says. You are saved not because of how much faith you have or how you feel about it; it is whether or not you trust Christ. That's it.

Having this assurance of eternal life will do something amazing for your Christian life right now—it will give you confidence and boldness when you talk to God (1 John 5:14).

If you are in fellowship with God, walking with Him, wanting His will to be done in your life, then you can ask Him anything. You're not trying to get God to do something He is reluctant to do. Prayer is not a battle with God, but our response to Him. It's lifting our will to Him, not trying to convince Him to bring

His will down to us. Prayer just becomes our thinking His thoughts after Him. And this gives us outrageous confidence that He hears us and will answer us. He may not give us exactly what we want, but we can be sure He is with us.

We have a heavenly Father who loves us. He wants to help us. However, if there's sin in our lives or if we're praying selfishly, He's not going to answer as we want. If we come to Him with mistrust or in a begging attitude, that will be a hindrance to our conversation. But when we trust Him, we can be confident He will hear what we ask and answer our prayer according to His will. Trusting Jesus Christ is as basic to living the Christian life as it is to receiving eternal life from Him.

As we think about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, how should we pray for those who are in a deliberate pattern of sin? How do we intercede and ask for God's will to be done for them?

John turns to a very specific and sensitive issue of praying for a Christian who is sinning "leading to death" (1 John 5:16). If the erring brother or sister is in Christ, this death is not spiritual since the child of God has eternal life. This "death" instead is a premature physical death. Believers can commit a sin for which our heavenly Father will call them home. He will remove them from this life physically, perhaps because they are disgracing Him. These sinners are God's children. He would never take them home if they had not been His children. The Lord doesn't whip the devil's children—He only disciplines His own. When His children sin leading to death, He will take them home.

What is this sin? The answer is not one thing specifically. For Moses and Aaron, it was their tempers. Ananias and Sapphira lived like hypocrites. Some believers in Corinth were drunk and disorderly at the Lord's Table. Every believer is capable of committing the sin leading to death—whatever it is for him. You go blazingly on in sin until God removes you from the scene, either by setting you aside or taking you home by death. God doesn't mind doing that.

All Christians alive today have sinned, but not a sin leading to death. Our sin was unrighteousness—evidence of our two natures are in play. Our new nature will not sin but wants to please God and grow in godliness. Our old nature *will* sin, but God forgives us and restores our repentant hearts. If He took home every believer who sinned, there would be none of us left.

A child of God understands this tension and keeps himself from sinning and doesn't give the evil one a foothold in his life. This also gives clarity to the question of whether or not a child of God can be demon possessed.

A Christian can be oppressed by demons, but not possessed. The Holy Spirit would not be dwelling where a demon was, since He is greater than anything in the world (1 John 4:4). The person possessed may not be saved, even if they think they are. The devil has rocked the world asleep in his wicked arms. But the Word of God is waking people up! Likewise, many people in the church are dead in their sins, and the Word of God is waking them up.

As John wraps up his letter, he reassures God's children that we have spiritual understanding through our *anointing* with the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20), whom Jesus Christ sent. Because of His Spirit, we can come to know God intimately, and can abide—be at home with—Him. *You've known this from the beginning*, John reminds them. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Christianity is not a religion. It is a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have Him, you have salvation. Be alert to anything that stands between you and Jesus. Keep yourself from the things of the world that distract your mind and steal your attention.

Before we leave John's first epistle, remember the three great attributes of God and how they hold each in a right and equal relationship. God is light, God is love, God is life.

God has revealed Himself to man. He wants to drive out the darkness that we might know Him and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now God has given the Holy Spirit to guide those who trust the Lord Jesus as Savior. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God. He is headlights in this dark world today.

LESSON 10

## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Why would people be more inclined to believe what they hear online or on TV rather than what God says about His Son?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How is failing to believe what God says calling God a liar?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. To have the Son of God is to have life. Do you have the Son? Who do you know who needs the Son?

4. Has there been a time in your life when you lacked assurance or confidence in your salvation? How can John's letter bring assurance?
5. What are some specific things for which you can pray and ask God when a person you love has succumbed to deliberate patterns of sin?
6. Again and again, John has warned in this letter against sin. What reasons do you think he had for constantly repeating himself?

7. If you had known John during the first century and had been able to ask him what he hoped to accomplish with this letter, what do you think his answer would have been?

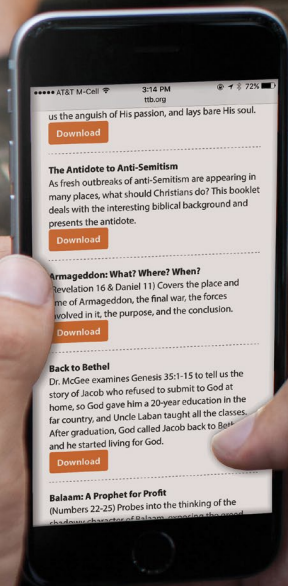
A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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